

learned, there was no such re-discovery of the Hebrew Scriptures. Although a sealed book to the masses, they had always been one of the principal text-books of the clergy and of the few scholars among the laity. In the mediaeval sermon equal reverence is shown for the Vulgate and for the Fathers. No point is held to be proved until it has been supported by quotations from both. In this traditional practice Wycliffe and his followers were contented to rest.¹ They backed their arguments with passages from the Bible and the Fathers, with this important difference, that they regarded the former as the ultimate authority with which all Church tradition must agree, or else be of no value whatever.

The priests' quotations and commentaries in the pulpit were not quite all the instruction in the Bible that the ordinary layman received. The history there recorded was taught, not out of the original, but in the form of separate tales, mixed up with later traditions and popular fables. Probably there was no distinction in the mind of the laymen between what we call ' Bible stories * and much other matter. A literature of this sort existed in the vernacular both in prose and verse, but these manuals were of very little value as intellectual or spiritual training, compared to the original from which they were supposed to be drawn. An example from the * Metrical Paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus ' will illustrate the character of this class of popular instruction. When Thermutis brought Moses before Pharaoh,

this King became to Mm in heart mild.
So very fair was this child;
And he took him on son's stead,
And his crown on his head he did,
And let it stand a stound ;
The child it threw down to the ground,
Hamon's likeness was thereon ;
This crown is broken, this is misdone.

The Bishop of Heliopolis, angry at the insult to the god, wants to kill Moses, but the King saves him, and gives him two burning coals, which he puts in his mouth.²

¹ W.'s works, *passim*; *Apology for the Lollards*, Camden Soc.

² E. B. T. S., *Genesis and Exodus*; O. E. B., 110; B. B. T. S. publications, *passim**